(f) by when a decision thereon is likely to be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI VIJAY GOEL): (a) to (f) The minimum wages are already being fixed under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 primarily with a view to safeguard the interest of unorganised sector workers who are generally illiterate and vulnerable to exploitation due to lack of bargaining power. Under the provisions of the Act, both Central and State Governments are the appropriate Governments to fix minimum wages in respect of scheduled employments under their respective jurisdictions. There are 45 scheduled employments in Central sphere and 1232 in the State spheres. In fixing the minimum wages, the norms recommended by the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in its 15th Session and subsequent judicial pronouncements are taken into account. The ILC comprises representatives of Central Trade Union Organisations, State Governments and Employers' Associations. The Government is exploring the possibilities of enactment of a unified Law on Wages including minimum wages in the light of the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour. However, given the procedures involved, it may not be possible to specify any time frame for the same.

Elimination of Child Labour

2419. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps are being taken by Government to eliminate child labour and bonded labour in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) where there are still child labour and bonded labour in some parts of the country;

(d) if so, the steps taken to identify and rehabilitate them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI VIJAY GOEL): (a) and (b) In order to eliminate child labour in the country, the Government had adopted a National Child Labour Policy in 1987. This policy consists of three components:

(i) A Legislative Action Plan;

(ii) Focussing of general development programmes for benefiting child labour wherever possible; and

(iii) Project based plan of action for launching of projects for the welfare of working children in areas of high concentration of child labour.

The Central Government has enacted the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, which provides for identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers. The Act provides for setting up of Vigilance Committees at District and Sub-Divisional levels to monitor and review the incidence of bonded labour on a regular basis.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Government of India has been implementing two schemes for rehabilitation of children withdrawn from work, namely the scheme of National Child Labour Projects (NCLP) and the scheme of Grant-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations. The major activity under the NCLP is running special schools/centres for rehabilitation of children withdrawn from work through non-formal/formal education, vocational training, nutrition, health care, stipend etc. So far, 100 NCLPs have been sanctioned for coverage of 2.11 lakh children in 13 child labour endemic states.

A Centrally Sponsored Plan Scheme for rehabilitation of bonded labourers has been in operation since May, 1978. Under the scheme, rehabilitation grant to the extent of Rs. 10,000/- per freed bonded labour was provided upto March, 2000 for rehabilitation of bonded labour. The scheme has been revised since May, 2000 and rehabiliation grant has been raised to Rs. 20,000/- per freed bonded labour. The expenditure is shared equally by the Central and State Government concerned on 50:50 basis except in the case of the seven North-Eastern States where such assistance is given on 100% subsidy basis. In the revised scheme, provision has been made for giving 100% grant of Rs. 2.00 lakh to State Government for conducting survey on bonded labourers in a district once in three years, Rs. 10.00 lakh per annum to a State for awareness generation and Rs. 5.00 lakh per annum to State for evaluatory study etc.